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Two Words of Cargo.*

BY MICHAEL WHITE.

THE *Tonquin* was an ocean tramp, and she looked it. As she lay in Port Durban, there was nothing of the spick-and-span smartness of the regular mail liner about her. She was a snub-nosed, tub-shaped, ungainly vessel, with engines so far aft that she sat the water in a kind of down-at-heel fashion.

Captains of men-of-war cast a single glance at the loose ends of her running gear, or the splashes of rust where fresh paint ought to have glistened, and passed on without exchanging seafaring compliments.

In the present instance she had shambled into Port Durban on the chance of selling a cargo of coal. She arrived just in time to witness three up-to-date colliers briskly unloading. An unlucky ship was the *Tonquin!* So vowed her master, who also asserted he had been abandoned by good fortune.

Aforetime Captain Bunce had worn the gold braid and brass buttons of a regular liner, but after losing two ships through misadventure, he ought to have considered himself lucky to obtain command of the *Tonquin*.

As to her two mates and the rest of her crew, speaking nautically, there was no salvation in them. They came out of sailor boarding-houses at diverse ports, and they went back to what that means

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whenever they could lay hands on a few pounds, dollars, rupees, or such medium of currency as might survive advances of pay or other deductions.

In all that unlucky down-and-out crew, only James Mackenzie, the Scotch engineer, was a man who could go ashore and walk with his head erect along the waterfront. Why he stood by the *Tonquin* was a mystery. It was believed he had a share in her, but in any case, engineers are prone to become attached to a particular set of pistons, rods, etc., and will exert all their ingenuity to keep worn-out machinery going. Thus it was with huge delight Mackenzie drove the old *Tonquin* ten knots an hour under the most favorable conditions, and was proud of six with a bit of a head sea on. It was Mackenzie who greeted the captain when he climbed aboard after a vain trip to dispose of his cargo of coal.

"We can't do anything here," announced the captain. "There'll be another collier in at noon, with contracts all closed for three months."

"Have ye got any cable orders?" questioned Mackenzie.

"Use my own judgment," replied the captain gloomily. "We'd have to dig into our cargo to cross the Indian Ocean, and I'm told the supply is ample at Bombay and Colombo. Next port north, Delagoa Bay, is full up. Don't see where to go."

Mackenzie rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"We'll just have to walk up the coast," he said at last. "There's nothing before Zanzibar, but the agent of that American firm building the railroad there is a Mackenzie—a cousin of some kind, I'm thinking. It's likely he'll recognize the kinship. So we might unload or pick up something yonder."

"They bring out all their own coal from New York." Bunce shook his head at the suggestion. "Luck is dead against us. I doubt—"

"Man," put in Mackenzie austerely, "ye've got to go somewhere, and it may just as well be Zanzibar as any other port. Ye're always talking of the *Tonquin's* bad luck, but worse luck always follows the saying of it. If she's no millionaire's yacht, she has a broad beam and other good points, as ye might have noted when we crossed the Atlantic in yon storm last winter. She's no' fast, I'll admit, but she squares her shoulders well to a head sea. She just wants a man with a might of faith in her."

Bunce did not reprove his engineer's frankness. Perhaps it was recognition of Mackenzie's reputed share in the *Tonquin*, but as likely evidence of his own lack of self-esteem since his seafaring

downfall. He depended a good deal on Mackenzie in emergencies, and therefore in the present one yielded.

"All right," he nodded. "Then we'll make for Zanzibar. Anyway, the market can't be worse there than at other points on the coast."

"And might be better if the old man would forget his liner days," Mackenzie muttered, as he climbed down the iron ladder leading to the engine room.

So the *Tonquin* clanked and shuffled out of Port Durban, to crawl northward up the East African Coast. It was the hot season of the year, but every twenty-four hour run she made seemed to bring her into a more sultry and stifling latitude. The sun blazed out of a cloudless sky, to be reflected on the smooth surface of a sea which looked as if flooded with oil. A following heavy under swell helped the *Tonquin* along, but it gave her an uncomfortable forward pitching motion—as if jerked now and then by a monster unseen hand.

On the day she steamed into Zanzibar harbor, the signs of atmospherical disturbance became more ominous. The sky took on a leaden hue, shot through with streamers of fiery light. A breeze which shifted to all four quarters, bore upon it strange moaning sounds, and tossed the black smoke from the *Tonquin's* funnel in all directions. Therefore it was with relief that Bunce anchored off the gray walls of the Sultan's old fort. Seaward, the ocean swell was breaking with an angry snarl over the outside reef, its white foam gleaming savagely against a sinister purple cloud bank.

Mackenzie went ashore to see what could be done with his American kinsman, and when he returned it was through a turmoil of the harbor waters. He came over the side drenched, wringing the spray from his garments—bearer of scant hope that the *Tonquin* could dispose of her cargo of coal in Zanzibar.

"I had a talk with yon Mackenzie, and he was real friendly, recognizing that we were kind o' related. But they've just contracted for all the coal needed for their railroad. He said, though, if we waited awhile, he would try and do something for us with the French line. By the look of things, I'm thinking we'll have no choice about waiting, and find a use for a good part of our cargo. Do ye note that lightning down on the horizon? It's got a blue tone to it. The wind and sea outside are getting up every minute."

Captain Bunce swept his eyes seaward and gravely nodded.

"We're in for dirty weather," he responded. "If the wind shifts a few points and brings a hurricane sea over the reef, we'll follow

our usual luck and be caught in a trap. Anyway, you'd better keep steam up,while I have the anchor cable ready to slip.

Mackenzie went below to dry himself off, and see to it that his beloved pistons and rods were in easy running order. Meanwhile Bunce got into rough weather togs, and hustled the crew around making loose objects fast. Things generally were secured none too soon, before the first blast of the onrushing hurricane struck the island. It came up on the wings of a bombarding fury, hurling darkness upon the scene, which seemed blacker in contrast to the violent electrical discharges. For sound, all the elements crashed together in mad explosions, or rioted in long sustained volumes of wind and thunder.

Three feet from the *Tonquin's* side there was nothing, for the human world had suddenly gone out, and she was alone upon the waters. And such waters! What Bunce had feared came to pass. The gale shifted to the danger point, and brought the tempest over the reef right into the harbor. Bunce had slipped his cable at the first onset, and climbed to the bridge house. He first rang for slow ahead, then half speed, but shortly the *Tonquin's* engines were making every possible revolution.

"Can you keep it up, Mackenzie?" he shouted down the speaking-tube to the engine room.

"She's doing fine," came the reassuring response. "Are ye putting out of the harbor?"

"Holding head on to the sea is all I can answer for. Can't make out anything to tell whether we're close in shore or not. But you'll keep her running?"

"I'll stay until she strikes, anyway," was the engineer's answer. Bunce remained in the bridge house hour after hour while the *Tonquin* was swept fore and aft by the hurricane. He was unable to gain any bearings of his position, for when night fell no shore lights were visible. At any moment he anticipated the shock of being hurled up on the beach, or crashed into by some other drifting vessel. Objects being swept through the air occasionally struck the roof of the bridge house, and threatened destruction. But he stood to his post, directing the man at the wheel, striving to keep his finger on the pulse of the ship. In this way he lost all reckoning of time, and was surprised when Mackenzie cautiously stepped in to announce that the grey light of morn was breaking. Both went out and clung to the rail, in part shelter of the bridge house.

"An unlucky ship is she?" Mackenzie shouted. "We're not

thirty yards from where we anchored overnight, but it's cost us many a ton of coal. Look at the wreckage yonder." He pointed shoreward.

Bunce peered from under the brim of his sou'wester, sweeping the edge of the water front, with the city in the background. Save the *Tonquin,* not a vessel which had sat upon the waters when that sudden darkness fell, was otherwise than mere driftwood piled upon the beach.

A big liner had been lifted bodily onto the wharf, a three-masted sailing ship stood amid the wreckage of the custom house. Beyond lay a panorama of devastation, with the character of the landscape entirely changed through the uprooting of its previous luxuriant vegetation.

"We seem to be the only thing afloat," Bunce spoke close to Mackenzie's ear. "It's a miracle!"

"A stoutly built ship and well cared for engines," Mackenzie pitched his voice above the howl of the wind.

He gripped the captain's forearm and pointed to an object ashore—apparently a man waving something from behind the shelter of a broken minaret.

"Is that some poor fellow gone crazy?" he questioned..

Bunce strained his eyesight for some minutes, then he went into the bridge house for his binoculars. He returned to level them on the man, who still waved a fluttering rag or garment.

"He's signalling," spoke up the captain, "and to us by the look of it."

He watched again, and turned the glasses over to Mackenzie.

"What do you make of it?" he asked.

Mackenzie adjusted the glasses and gazed steadily.

"He's using the marine code, and I'll wager it's that American Mackenzie," he cried. "Have ye yer book handy, Captain?"

The captain went back for his book of signals, also a pennant which he tied to the end of a stick. Presently Mackenzie read off a message.

"He wants to know if we have coal enough to take us to Aden."

"Over two thousand miles," put in the captain. "How about it, Mackenzie?"

"It would about use up our cargo in this weather," the other responded. "Ye can answer, 'yes,' Captain."

The captain waved back the reply. Then came another message:

"Will you accept charter to run to Aden for cable? Cable here broken."

"It's a risk, but this is our chance, I'm thinking," said Mackenzie.

"If the hurricane comes down on us again, we'd be as well off in the open sea. I'll reply 'yes'," decided the captain.

The captain waved back an affirmative. Then there was trouble before the next message was deciphered. But at last it read:

"Cable Anson, Cherry & Co., New York—'Zanzibar swept by hurricane. Buy cloves.' Can you start right away?"

Mackenzie swung down off the bridge, without lingering to watch the captain frantically waving "yes" after "yes."

"Every pound of steam on," he shouted, when he tumbled into the engine room.

"All hands stand by," roared the captain from the bridge.

Presently the *Tonquin* began to strain and shiver, as all the power of her engines was put into driving her toward the mouth of the harbor. Slowly, inch by inch, she gained headway in the teeth of the still furious storm. Very gradually objects alongshore—the liner on the wharf and the sailing ship amid the ruins of the custom house—were left astern. As the long minutes went by, she drew out toward the foaming reef. Bunce stood by the wheel, with one hand on the spoke, himself steering her through the tumult of waters. His features were set, with eyes fixed ahead. He spoke a tense word or two at the critical moment to the mate at his side. Finally a light came into his face, which had not gleamed there for many a day. He threw the wheel over, the *Tonquin* swung around between seas, and headed northward in the tail of the hurricane.

Bunce put his mouth to the tube and shouted down to the engine room:

"We've cleared the reef, Mackenzie. It now all depends on your engines."

* * * * * *

It was a rusty, storm battered, and tattered looking hulk the port officer of Aden boarded, having noted that her name was *Tonquin*. Her boats were all swept away, stout iron rails snapped and twisted like match stems, and her upper works encrusted with brine, giving her a ghostly appearance. When the port officer sought her captain, he found Bunce and Mackenzie grasping each other's hands, and executing what looked like a hornpipe. There was excuse for this unseamanlike indulgence of feeling. On that run up from Zanzibar, fifty times the *Tonquin* had buried herself in seas, and no one expected her to rise again. She had stood on end and rolled her sides under water, but her tub-like build had served her well when a vessel of finer lines would have gone to the bottom.

For all, sleep and food had been taken in snatches of complete exhaustion. They had been drenched to the skin every hour of the trip, and made the sport of riotous elements. But every man of that crew had stood to his orders, and thereby redeemed himself in nautical opinion.

"Where is your manifest of cargo?" was one of the first questions the port officer asked.

"Cargo?" replied the captain. "We had coal once, but we've used up nearly every pound. You can write us down as carrying just two words of cargo, and that is a private message to put on the cable."

"It's a record in nautical annals," added Mackenzie.

The port officer thought the captain and his engineer had gone crazy with hardship and suffering. But not so the firm in New York which received the message:

"Zanzibar swept by hurricane. Buy cloves."

They reckoned the clove groves in Zanzibar must have been destroyed utterly, for their agent to charter a ship to run over two thousand miles with such a message. To them it signified that there would be no more cloves in the market for over three years, since Zanzibar is the world's principal clove supply. So they bought cloves—everywhere. What is equally to the point, they cabled the extra price of the *Tonquin's* charter without question, so that all hands were comparatively rolling in wealth.

"And ye said there was no luck to yerself or the old ship," cried Mackenzie to the captain. "Did ye note that liner on the wharf as we steamed out? I'm thinking we sold our coal to fair advantage. Yon American had nerve to charter us for such a bit work, but it's not surprising when ye consider his name is Mackenzie. Mar there's no ill luck, but what we make for ourselves."

The Feast of the Maiden.*

BY MAUD MOSHER.

"WHAT have I done that my love should be greeted with hatred? Grandmother, am I an alien, an enemy because I have attended the white man's school, have learned his ways—the ways of civilization?"

The Indian girl returned from the school to the reservation, straight and slender, black hair coiled like a crown about the head so proudly set above the graceful shoulders, dress of dark blue fashioned in simple modish lines, stretched out her arms in impassioned gesture toward the old squaw who, with her blanket close drawn round her withered form, was sitting by the camp fire in front of the teepee door.

"Through all the long years at school I have thought only of my people. I have studied unceasingly that I might know how to teach them to live the better way. Through the snows of winter, through the blossoms of summer, I have toiled; I have had but one desire and that was to help my own tribesmen.

"With joy in my heart I returned to the reservation; I was greeted with coldness. I have tried to teach the women; they turn away. I extend helping hands; with aversion my efforts are refused. What is the reason? Tell me, grandmother, tell me."

The grandmother lifted her deep-lined, weather-beaten face, gazed at the girl in silence, then turned away and looked long into the west where the clear red of the sky was slowly changing into the purple of the star-lit prairie night.

"It is three months since I came back to the reservation. Three months of toil, loneliness and discouragement. My heart pines for the old days of the school life. I long for my school home, for the grass and the flowers and the trees that have always whispered to me of the wild grasses, the river roses, the pine trees of the Indian lands.

"Everyone loved me and trusted me at my school home. My school mother kissed me when she said 'goodbye.' Tears were in

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her eyes, tears in her voice as she said, 'You are a good girl, Louise, one of my dearest. I will miss you, and no one can take your place with me, but you must go home to your own people, as you have wished all these years, and teach them the things we have tried to teach you in the school.' She said, grandmother, that it would be hard, but she could not know how hard, how cruel it has been."

The girl clasped her hands together, her voice trembled with unshed tears as she cried, "Oh, my school mother, you were mother and home and friends to me while I was learning the ways of the white man! Grandmother, has no one any kindness for me? Does no one want the heart full of love I bring to them? Does no one in the camp want the help I long to give?"

The Indian girl pressed her fingers to her mouth as she strove to still the trembling of her lips, to keep back the tears that strained to fall.

The squaw rose feebly to her feet, and leaning on her staff turned toward the teepee.

The girl sprang forward, "Grandmother, grandmother, why do you not answer? What have I done? Tell me! You are old, you know why the women of the camp spit at my feet when I pass them by. You know why all refuse my offers of help and love. You know why all turn in aversion from me. You know, will you not tell me?"

The old squaw paused; looked searchingly into the eyes of the pleading girl. A vision of her own youth rose before her, when her love for her people was as warm and strong as that of the granddaughter who was so like herself and yet so different, with her dainty civilized ways—the manners of the hated pale face.

As she paused the girl spoke again, this time more calmly. "Grandmother, our people must learn to live as the white man lives or we must perish. We have been driven back, back. We have resisted every step. Now we are not allowed to leave the reservations. They are holding us prisoners but we need not remain as such. For every Indian who will learn to live a civilized life, who will go out and make his way in the world, there is a place. The white man is not a foe. He is our friend if we will let him be our friend, but in our ignorance we refuse—we stay on the reservations and we die! Grandmother, there is no other way. If we would survive we must learn to live the civilized life."

The squaw stretched out her hands toward the west, where the last red ray shot across the evening sky. "My child, I have been silent, but it is not with aversion. Your words have sunk into my

heart. They are true. One by one I have seen the children of the forest die on these barren stony lands of the Indian Reserves. It is long years since we left the land of clear waters. We have fought, we have suffered, we have starved as inch by inch we have been driven back by the white man and—we have been conquered.

"You are young and see with the eyes of youth that are full of courage. Mine eyes are old. They long to see the happy hunting grounds of my people. If you would teach the new and strange ways of the pale face you must have the confidence of your people else they will not listen to you. Your grandmother's heart is not a stone, but I say to you, prove to the people amongst whom you were born that you are a virgin with honor. Then will they listen to your teaching, then will your toil not be in vain."

The girl's voice faltered as in low anguished tones she repeated, "With honor, with honor!" As the squaw's meaning came to her, her eyes closed for a moment as she staggered backward. Then with a gesture of strong-hearted purpose she lifted her head. "Grandmother, I am with honor. My school mother will swear that I am."

The old woman's hands closed more tightly on the oaken staff. "The word of the white woman would not gain you the confidence of your people. When you went to the school the last time you were to remain five winters and five summers. Only four snows have come and gone, and you have come back. Your classmate, the son of White Antelope, has whispered in the camp that the white man's school would keep you no longer, that you were dishonored and an outcast, and that you were sent home before the time of your school days was finished. That is why the women turn from you; that is why they point you out to their children as a thing of derision. That is why they spit at your feet. That is why my heart has been heavy in my bosom."

"Grandmother, in four snows I have learned as much as the other boys and girls learned in five; that is why I returned so soon. I was first in honor of all my class. It was I who spoke for our class on our graduation day—no boy, no girl stood so high as I. I have the paper—if you could only read it you would know that what I say is true. Grandmother, do you not believe me? I thought you would be glad and proud—"

For the first time the squaw's voice softened. "I believe you, little one, but you must prove to your people your purity."

"How—but how? They cannot read the school paper. They will not believe what I say. They will not even listen!"

The grandmother's voice was stern again as she replied, "You know the ancient custom of our people, whereby if a maiden be slandered she may prove her innocence. Follow you the custom of your fathers."

"I have laid aside the red man's ways. Shall I follow the ancient custom, and still try to teach the white man's civilization?"

The old squaw walked in silence to the teepee door, then turned. In harshness she addressed the anguished girl, whose hopeless eyes saw the work and loving ambition of her whole life crumbling away before the breath of untrue reproach. "You are young, I am old. You know the customs of the pale face, I know the ways of my people. Since we wandered the forests, strong and happy, the Indian girl of the tribe of the Dakotas, whose honor has been questioned, has made the Feast of the Maiden. If you are innocent prove your innocence according to the ancient custom. If you are not innocent pitch your teepee on the outskirts of the village. Enter mine no more!"

Abruptly the old woman lifted the canvas door of the white teepee, entered it, and closed the opening behind her.

The stars came out one by one. The long, shivering wail of the coyote trembled in the air. The evening breeze sighing over the prairie brought the scent of the burning buffalo grass. The night grew deeper, and along the horizon a low line of fire appeared. Still the girl sat on the steps of the schoolhouse where she had come as teacher three months before. As she tried to still the pain in her heart her life passed before her as one sees a moving picture thrown on a screen—the shy, frightened little girl sent to the distant boarding-school to learn the strange, unfamiliar customs of the pale faces; the girl older grown coming back for the first time to the reservation home; her awakening to the fact that she had grown away from all the old Indian ways; the hurting, tearing home-sickness for the school home and the school mother. Then she saw her joyful return to them, and the dawning of desire to study and learn so that she might go back to her people and teach them the beauty of civilized life. She saw her Commencement Day, the masses of golden-hearted daisies amongst which she stood in her white dress when she spoke for her class, under the red and white and green ribbons—the school colors.

The picture stopped moving. The wounded ache of misunderstood and defeated purpose confused her mind, and she cried out in her despair, "It is cruel, it is cruel! He said he would have revenge but such a revenge! I did not love him, I could not marry

him, but I never dreamed he would try to blight my life by uttering slanders against me to my own people."

A sound broke the silence of the night. What was it—a pony—galloping? She had scarcely wiped away the tears before the pony suddenly halted at her gate. The rider had thrown himself from the saddle, and in joyful tones was saying, "Louise, my sweetheart, are not you glad to see me? At the Agency they told me that you were at this camp, and that the prairie fire was burning this way, so I rode out to see you, and to know that you were safe."

Glad to see him! It was Henry La Franc, her classmate for years, her playmate before they had both gone away to school. As they had grown older, her sweetheart, her school-boy sweetheart and friend. There was no need to say the words; her whole face sparkled with the love and joy that overwhelmed her heart.

Although they had entered school together, Louise had outstripped Henry in finishing the course of study. "I've a position here on the reservation as assistant carpenter. How do you like that, little Morning Light? Just took the oath of service today."

"How did it come about?" repeated Henry at Louise's astonished question. "When you left school I obtained permission to quit the schoolroom; never did like the books anyway, and spent all my time at work on my trade. I had almost finished that. Thought I would show the superintendent and myself too, what I could do when I really tried, so here I am. You might tell me you're glad to see me eight or ten times more, Louise dearest."

The wind through the prairie grass seemed to be singing the words, "I am so glad, so glad you've come home—"

Louise never quite knew how she came to tell the story of her failure in her chosen work, but her heart was too full to carry the burden alone, when one who would be sure to understand and help was by her side.

Henry was very thoughtful, then said tenderly, "There are two ways out of this trouble. It is for you to choose. You could ask for a transfer to another tribe and another school, and I might give James White Antelope such a thrashing that he would be glad to say that he had been lying; but if I did that, and if you went away, or if you stayed, our people would not believe you any more than they do now. They would say that this was the white man's way of settling such matters, and that would put them against you.

"Your grandmother is right. The camp Indians would believe nothing either you or I or anyone else could say unless you conform

to the old custom, and give the Feast of the Maiden. That is the only defence they can understand. I would advise you to speak to them in the language they can comprehend—once they believe in you the way will be easy."

From teepee to teepee through the village, the next morning, went the whispered message, "Morning Light, the granddaughter of Natrema, who has returned from the school of the pale faces, makes tomorrow the Feast of the Maiden. According to the ancient custom everyone must come to the sacred rock on the hill."

In the morning the Indians, decked in all their barbarous finery, gathered in a great circle round the ceremonial place of the band. In families they came; the husband walking in front, the wife with her baby on her back meekly following; the little children stilled into silence by the solemn faces of their parents.

Louise, her black hair braided in Indian fashion in two braids which hung on each shoulder, dress of deer skin ornamented with elk teeth and porcupine quills, beaded moccasins and leggins, arms, belt and neck encircled with beads, with head held high and eyes upturned as though invoking the aid of the Great Spirit, slowly and calmly walked through the circle and stood beside the sacred stone, waiting.

One awful moment of suspense she stood there alone. Was there not one maiden in all that village who loved her, and who would stand by her side? Was there not one whose love of truth and justice would prompt her to leave the silent circle of Indians? The seconds seemed like hours, the minute as a year, as she stood there alone. Was there not one girl who for love of fair play would leave the circle standing there in judgment?

Her mind seemed dazed as though held in prison bonds. Slowly, strugglingly, one by one, the ancient words faltered from her lips:

"I, the Indian maiden, wrongly accused,
Stand here before you justice beseeching,
I stretch out my hands to you, comrades and playmates,
Stand ye beside me love's arms outreaching."

Hesitatingly, from her half-hidden place behind her mother, stepped the little Prairie Rose. In silence, with head shyly bowed, she took her place at Louise's right hand. The words came quicker now:

"If not loving me ye love honor and justice,
Truth and mercy your hearts are enfolding,
Then stand ye beside me, Indian maidens,
My good name I cherish, this knife upholding."

One flash, another, in the sun, as Louise drew from her garments

the long knife, and stood with it upraised above her head, while the daughters of Elk Horn, Gray Wolf, Eagle Feather and Running Water, left their places in the circle and stood beside her. With heads bowed, gazing at the sacred stone, they took their places on the ground, seated round the flat stone on which was placed the dried meat and parched corn, according to the old custom.

Proudly Louise searched the faces of the motionless Indians for that of James White Antelope, her traducer. She knew he would not remain away from the feast for to do so would be admission of guilt. Shrinking behind the powerful form of Black Crow, the medicine man, he stood, with blanket drawn closely round his shoulders, half hiding his face. At his side stood her champion, Henry La Franc.

Another long flash in the sun as Louise let fall the upraised knife, striking it into the ground beside the sacred stone, then seated herself beside the five Indian girls. Prairie Rose, who through love had taken her place as silent champion of purity and honor, passed the dish of corn and meat to the other maidens.

The scent of burning grass filled the air. The wind blew the blankets of the standing Indians. A tiny papoose lifted its little voice in a wail, to be quickly hushed by the mother, who coldly viewed the vindication of the slandered girl.

The last morsel of dried meat, the last grain of corn eaten, and the seated circle rose to their feet. Prairie Rose resumed her place at Louise's right hand, the others stood just behind the two.

In silence Louise waited a moment as her eyes slowly searched the faces of the waiting Indians, then:

"Today to the sacred Feast of the Maiden
By the holy rock of the tribe I have bidden,
Now let the man who slander has spoken
Repeat his words openly, those that were hidden."

Not a sound, not a movement answered her. Another long swinging flash in the sun, as she seized the knife from the ground, held it again above her head, as she repeated the invitation—

"Now—let—the—man—who—slander—has—spoken
Repeat—his—words—openly—those—that—were—hidden."

Silence! A sudden movement, the struggling form of James White Antelope was bodily thrust into the circle, while Henry La Franc's voice rang out, "This is the man. He dares not speak because his words are those of the serpent. Give the challenge, Morning Light!"

With the knife still upheld Louise's impassioned voice repeated the last words of the ancient rite,

"If you this day can prove I am guilty,
Then I will live in your tepee forever,
Or outcast by you an outcast remaining,
All ties with my tribesmen then will I sever.

Henry still held the struggling, blanketed form of the cowardly Indian before him while the interval of silence, prescribed by the old law endured.

"Speak! The maiden bids you speak!" cried the five Indian maidens.

The son of White Antelope tried to frame the words that would in some measure justify him in the eyes of his tribe. His voice faltered as his eyes met those of the enraged girl, gleaming knife in hand.

The standing circle of Indians now took up the cry, "Speak! The maiden bids you speak!"

A sudden blow to right and left, a bound and he was on the back of his pony and fiercely lashing it was out of sight down the hill. With wild cries, hoots and jeers the crowd of men and boys followed driving him from the camp never to return.

The wind changed; the scent of the burning grass no longer filled the air. The low line of fire at the horizon, blown back upon itself struggled, then slowly, slowly, died out.

Throwing off the Indian costume, Louise stood before the village clad in her dark blue dress made in the white woman's fashion.

As one by one the Indian women gave her their hands with the gutteral "How Kola," (How-do-you-do my friend) Louise knew that they understood, that they gave her not only the hand of friendship, but added to it the form of greeting accorded the pale face teachers.

Proudly Henry took his place at her side, proudly walked through the village with her to the little camp schoolhouse. He said—just what lovers always say no matter what the color or the language or country. It all means just the same; just the three magic words, "I love you."

At the Crack o' Doom.*

BY JAMES A. BEVERLY.

ES, marm, it's just on top of the rise," the stage driver answered, cracking his whip over the back of the off-leader.

"But why is it called the Crack o' Doom?" the little woman with the pale face who was seated at his side asked.

" 'Cause it's set on the edge of the Crack. The canyon is over yonder where you see those high cliffs, and it's a blind, a crack in the hills, and runs a mile or more clear into the mountains, then comes to a full stop against a granite wall two thousand feet high. Now," he went on, "when you stand at the end window in the room overlooking the Crack, you can hardly see the bottom, it's that deep. Get up you lazy brutes, get up!"

"Why should one wish to build on the very edge of the canyon?" she questioned.

"Listen, marm," he grinned. "When you reach the Inn, you ask the reason of old John McCrea, and he'll 'most likely tell you nothing at all."

"It is a respectable place, is it not?"

"Huh, respectable! I stop there," he advanced as a conclusive argument. "Respectable," he repeated, "you can just bet, yes!"

Presently, she asked: "I dare say you know a man hereabouts by the name of Ludington? He's often at the Inn I've been told."

"Maybe so; what's his particular looks?"

"I have not seen him for years," she said in a hesitating tone, "so my description may be faulty. He is, or was, rather slight in build, dark complexioned, and clean-shaven."

"Blessed if I know him," he returned. "But, if he's 'bout forty years old, lame in the nigh leg, face one mass of hair, then, to be sure, I do know him. It's Tom Ludington, and a thoroughbred at that," he laughed.

She gave the driver a sidewise glance as she half-questioned: "I do not quite understand, sir?"

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"'Bout his being a thoroughbred, eh? Oh, marm, that's a saying of mine, and it means that he's a dumned curious cuss."

"He is not always at the Inn?" she asked.

"Sometimes once and sometimes twice a month. You see," he explained, "he's mining in the Crooked Trail Country, thirty miles from the Doom. Kin of yours, perhaps?"

She appeared not to have heard for she did not reply but craned her neck in an endeavor to obtain a clearer view of the Inn which was now discernible ahead.

"You see the Doom, do you?" the driver asked. "That's it yonder. Don't you see the sign running across the front: 'Crack o' Doom, by John McCrea'?"

"Well," she commented, "so that's the Inn? What a small building for a hotel. I forgot to ask: Are there women at the Doom, sir?"

"Women!" he laughed boisterously. "Why, sure thing. There's Squeaky Sue, the squaw, Tantrum Kate, the cook, and little Hattie Cole. Why shouldn't there be women at the Doom, eh?"

By this time the stage was at the door of the building, a desolate, tumble-down affair. The stage's insides, two men and a boy, alighted, to be welcomed by a squat, one-time Scot, but now an American: the proprietor, John McCrea.

He offered a helping hand to the one outside, our lady of the pale face, who came down from her perch and was directly inside the Doom, standing at the office desk.

"May I be assigned the room overlooking the Crack?" she asked of McCrea as she wrote her name on the page of the dilapidated register.

The bushy-eyed landlord looked at the woman critically.

"Madam," he said in a tone of decision, "it is occupied, but I will give you a room at the other end of the Doom. It's good enough for anyone," he half-growled.

Old John McCrea was somewhat given to crabbedness.

At McCrea's reply, she compressed her lips tightly; then she pulled the register toward her and glanced at the names of the recent arrivals. Shortly afterward she was shown to her room.

As she passed from the office McCrea went to the inn-yard where the stage driver was.

"I say, Coulson, who in the devil is the woman you brought up? We've not had one here since the gay widow. You remember?"

"How in Tophet should I know?" the man demanded. "Found

her at the railroad station and that's all I am able to tell you except she asked did I know Ludington."

"Whew!" whistled McCrea. "The devil, she did! Asked for Tom Ludington?"

"That's what the court remarked."

"What did you tell her?"

"Oh, I just said that he was a thoroughbred."

"Nothing else, you're certain?"

"No, nothing else," he confirmed, scratching his scrubby chin as if to refresh his memory.

"Who do you reckon she is? She wanted the scenic parlor, and when I told her she couldn't have it she was damned pouty about it."

"I don't know who she is," the driver said; "but one thing I imagine I know."

"And that's this," returned the landlord: "she's going to cut quite a figure before we see the last of her!"

"You're head is level, John," the other grinned. "She knows her business better than we can guess."

"She's registered as Miss Susan Jones. Do you reckon that's her name?"

"Well, I'll be switched," chuckled the driver. "Huh, more likely Miss Susan Got-it-in-for-you. Say," coming close, and lowering his voice, "Tom Ludington's going to meet his Waterloo, all right. You mark what your red-headed driver's telling you, John."

A scowl wrinkled the landlord's forehead as he idly bored his boot heel in the ground.

"By Godfrey," he belched forth, "then there will be hot times around these diggings! I won't have Ludington on the premises. Why, I think sometimes he's cousin to the devil!"

"Maybe, maybe," the other commented. "Better keep a tight hand on the reins, John," he advised as he opened the corral gate for the passing of the mules.

The newly-arrived guest impressed the inmates of the Inn as one fully able to care for herself. To none did she give her reason for being at the Inn, nor did she further question as to Ludington.

She registered the afternoon of June third. On the seventeenth of the month she settled her account, left her belongings with the landlord, and disappeared from the premises.

That night Ludington came in from his mine and occupied the room overlooking the Crack.

During the greater part of his stop at the Inn he was closeted in his room with John McCrea. He remained three

days and then left, locking the door and pocketing the key.

Within two hours of his departure, the woman who had registered the third, returned; but she volunteered no reason for her going nor did she tell where she had been.

Later in the afternoon and on her entering the office from her room, she stepped to the desk where the landlord sat.

"Mr. McCrea," she said, "I wish to enter the front room: the one I have heard mentioned as the 'scenic parlor,'" she smiled.

"Ho, ho!" laughed John McCrea, winking slyly. "That's impossible, marm. Why, woman," he went on, "I rent it to Mr. Ludington by the year, and he has the key."

"Nevertheless," she urged in a determined tone, "I must enter that room!"

"Must!" echoed the man behind the desk.

John McCrea raised his shaggy eyebrows and peered over the top of his steel-bowed spectacles at the woman making this insistent demand. He even ventured to mutter inaudibly: "Mad, damned mad."

"Oh, no, Mr. McCrea," she laughed, as she surmised his thoughts, "I am not mad. I am, however, very much in earnest and, moreover, I believe I have the right to enter that room."

"What are your credentials?" McCrea sneered.

"That I am more interested in Mr. Ludington than any other can possibly be," she returned gravely.

"By Jerico, is that a fact, marm? None of his kin, eh?"

There was a slight tremor in the landlord's voice, and he moved nervously in his seat.

"It is not necessary that I tell you," she evaded. "But, listen, sir, I must and I shall enter that room, you willing or otherwise."

The combative blood of McCrea surged hotly through his veins as he denied her the right in words more expressive than polite. She should not cross the threshold of Ludington's room! Did she understand?

She gave him a searching look, turned on her heel and left the office.

The landlord thought he had "squelched" her effectually; but he reckoned unwisely for, as he was about to lock the outer door, preparatory to the night's closing, and as he turned to do so with his back toward the stairway, the cold muzzle of a revolver touched his neck.

"Now, Mr. McCrea," said a voice as calmly as one might ask a slight favor, "you will please open Mr. Ludington's door."

McCrea was nonplused. He was unarmed and could but comply and, therefore, he hesitated not an instant. He quickly produced a key and unlocked the door.

"Thank you, Mr. McCrea," she acknowledged coolly. "I regret that you compelled me to use drastic methods, and hereafter I am sure we shall better understand each other. Kindly enter the room, and light the lamp."

A revolver close to one's head is an incentive to quick action. McCrea hastened to do her bidding.

"So far, well and good," she remarked. "Sit in that chair," she directed, "and place your hands flat on the table with your arms extended. Yes, that is as I wish," she said as he followed her command.

With her revolver covering him, she locked the door and then drew a chair to the side of the table facing her prisoner.

"Reverend Donald McClaren."

She spoke very distinctly, so that her listener could not misunderstand.

As he regarded her with half-shut eyes, she continued in a more imperative tone:

"Do you hear me, sir? I repeat, Reverend Donald McClaren!"

"Who in the devil is he?" was his surly response.

"He is sitting opposite me."

"Tommyrot! What are you playing? Are you crazy, woman?" he cried, but in a voice which belied his words.

"I was once, I fully believe; but I am not now," she retorted bitterly. "It is useless dodging the issue. I am here for a definite purpose which you well know. You thought to disguise your identity when you changed your name; thought to hide by assuming the role of a mountain tavern keeper. My God!" she almost sobbed so great was her emotion. "What have I not suffered from you and from John Backing, he who poses as Thomas Ludington!"

She delivered her invective passionately, leaning forward toward the man, throwing her impulsive nature into her every movement.

"Who—in—the—devil—are—you?" the landlord finally found breath to stutter, the while working his fingers nervously.

"The girl you two swore into a madhouse!" she cried. "I am John Backing's wife!"

"Hell's furies!" he gasped, his lower jaw trembling. "What do you demand?"

"Justice!"

The word fairly sprung from her lips.

"Justice, justice?" he mumbled, his facial muscles twitching spasmodically.

"Restitution of all you two have stolen, everything you possess. The marriage license and the certificate, everything. The child you kidnapped I have recognized in the girl called Hattie Cole!"

How true her demand rang in his ears, he alone understood.

"You'll wait a long while," he snarled, with seeming bravado. "Do you imagine that you'll make me acknowledge your demands; acknowledge that which will make me a felon! What?"

She cried exultantly: "You confess your identity?"

"Never to the world, never!" he cried. "But to you, yes. I confess to you, for mark well my words, you hell-witch, you'll soon see your finish and not be able to tell tales," he hissed, as he gained temporary courage to combat her.

"Donald McClaren," she retorted, "do not be too self-confident. I have sent the stage driver for John Backing. Moreover, I have prevailed on the women and the girl to go to the dance at Crestin's Mill. You have no guests to-night, and you and I have the premises to ourselves. Ah, you change color? You do realize, do you not, that I have the upper hand?"

The man's face had blanched to the color of the whitened wall.

"I am a desperate woman," she went on, "else," tapping her hand bag significantly, "I would not carry that within this bag which can blow this building to atoms."

He caught her meaning quickly.

"Listen, for God's sake, listen!" he implored, his voice quivering as he realized the import of her words. "I am ten years older than I was at that time, and I have not long to live—"

"True, you have not unless you obey me," she broke in quietly.

"I was led astray," he pleaded weakly. "I was bribed to marry you to Backing, and to aid in your being placed in an asylum. I abducted your child; he stole the will and the other papers. Oh, my God, it was a miserable affair!" he moaned.

"On the other hand," she reminded him, "I was duped to marry Backing. You were a justice of the peace, although posing as a minister; so my marriage was legal. You caused me to be placed in a madhouse. You wretch, I have lived for this night!"

She arose from her chair, and commanded him to turn about and open the door leading to the room overlooking the Crack.

"I have no key," he lied weakly.

"I advise you to open that door, sir!" she cried, shoving her revolver closer to his head.

This was sufficient. He drew forth a key and unlocked the door, she pushing him before her into the room.

The apartment contained a fireproof safe, a table, chairs, and a coil of rope, one end of which was fastened to a half-inch iron ring screwed in the floor. The rope lay directly beneath the window, which was screened by a wooden shutter.

On the table was a candle, half burned. This she told him to light, and then ordered him to open the safe.

He protested that he did not know the combination; that Ludington, as he still designated Backing, kept the combination a secret.

For a brief moment, she looked at his lying face; then, with a meaning gesture of the gun, she bade him mark with his thumb nail a line on the candle a quarter of an inch from its burning end.

"I shall give you until the candle has burned to the thumb mark," she told him. "If you have not opened the safe by that time I shall shoot, with your bald head as my target. Come, sir, do you value your life?"

Slowly the candle burned, steadily the man eyed it as he listened for the coming of his confederate; but as this did not eventuate, he knelt, worked the combination, and threw open the door.

While he was so doing, she, still keeping him covered, unbolted the shutter and raised the sash.

As he resumed a standing posture, she told him to throw the rope out of the window. This he did.

"I have here," she said, as he turned toward her, "a bill of sale covering this building and all property which I know you hold. Also a confession. Seat yourself in that chair, and sign these papers with your legal name—Donald McClaren."

Like a snarling, angry cur, he sprang at her throat; but, quick as thought, she shot the ball, cutting his chin whiskers close to his face. He was tamed; he took her pen, and wrote where she indicated.

Motioning him to his feet, she pointed to the open window.

"You planned this room," she told him grimly, "with its window overlooking yonder grave-like canyon. You did it for an evil purpose. That rope was to send, perhaps has sent already, your victims to injury or to death. You shall meet a similar fate."

Thoroughly cowed, he blundered to the window and crawled outside, where he grasped the rope; then raised a pleading face to hers. Her response was to tap his forehead with her gun. He muttered incoherently and began his downward slide.

The light of a June full moon was flooding the canyon, throwing its rays over the black and rugged wall of the immense crack, thus rendering the landlord's descent plainly discernible.

She leaned far over the sill and saw him slip, inch by inch, two hundred odd feet until he alighted on a projecting ledge. As he loosened his hold of the rope, she jerked it from his hands and pulled it within the room.

Again she peered downward. Far, far beneath, clinging to his uncertain foothold, stood the wretch, his white, upturned face showing ghastly in the moonbeams.

The woman reeled backward, sank into a chair, and gave way to a flood of tears. Directly, however, the paroxysm passed, and she was again the stern, unrelenting avenger.

She examined the contents of the safe, and found the documents she sought. This finished, she glanced at her watch. It wanted but a few minutes of the time when she expected the return of the stage driver, and as she debated with herself she heard the rumble of the team.

Presently there came a confused clamor, the stamping of feet, and a rattling of the latch on the outer door.

She glided from the room, turned the key, and was back in the larger apartment with her revolver pointed toward the entrance.

This was the specter which confronted the man when he burst into the room, swearing angrily that he should be brought to the Inn at that hour.

With a sidewise lunge, he gasped:

"By the eternal Gods!"

"You see me, and seeing, realize that your game is finished; that your poor dupe now holds the winning hand!"

She whispered close to his ear. How he wished that she had screamed, shouted, laughed at his discomfiture—anything but that damning whisper.

"Yes, it is I," she said bitterly. "The landlord received me as a guest, not recognizing the girl of ten years back; but I believe I have convinced him of my identity. Your very manner shows that you understand. John Backing," she went on fiercely, "let me caution you not to try desperate measures; for if you do—" shrugging her shoulders meaningly—"Well," she paused, "I think you catch my meaning. You think me insane? Never was mortal more sane than I!"

She waved him toward the inner room. He eyed her closely as if seeking a means of escape; but that steadily held weapon, that

pale, resolute face impelled him to obey. He entered the room.

"On the table," she said coolly, "lay two papers which you will sign with your legal name, directly beneath that of Donald McClaren."

As he signed, she continued: "I know these documents are legal, I saw to that fact before I came here. Hattie Cole is my child; but to make doubly sure, you will sign this paper," tossing another to him.

For the second time since coming into her presence, he strove to speak.

"I admit your charges," he whispered hoarsely, "but cannot we compromise?"

"Compromise!"

How sneering was the tone in which she repeated the word!

"Compromise, and I for ten long years confined to a living tomb! You forged my father's name to a bogus will, leaving his fortune to my girl; then stole her, so that you might profit thereby. Deny it if you can!" she challenged.

"At least," he whined, "let me leave the mountains; let me flee the country! I will never disturb you!"

She looked at him with half-closed eyes.

"You miserable wretch," she burst forth, "you ask this favor? Listen. I have my papers, yours and McClaren's signed confession; I have my girl, but," and she shook with suppressed passion, "I shall never regain the past. It is lost to me forever. I recall, oh, so vividly, that once you asked me sneeringly: 'what can a woman do?' It was when you had me pinioned, as it were, soon after my babe came," her voice trembled just a trifle; "but you now realize what one woman has done, do you not?"

The smile on her face was damning. He felt it.

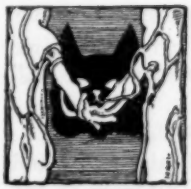
Again did she wave her hand, indicating, as he well knew, that he was to descend into the canyon. He turned quickly, and sprang sidewise; but as quickly, he was met with a bullet in his forearm.

With terror written on his face, he turned at her very nod, and slowly, because of his maimed arm, grasped the rope and slid downward to the ledge.

When she saw him alight, she went to the office, where she procured a knife with which she cut the rope where it crossed the sill. It wavered and twisted, then went plunging into the depths of The Crack o' Doom.

Wallace Fordham's Mother. *

BY CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT.



RS. FORDHAM! I don't know any Mrs. Fordham! Did she say what she wanted, James?" Miss Sally Postlethwaite looked up from the card the butler had just brought to her.

The butler bowed. "She said if you didn't recognize the name, ma'am, to say that she was Wallace Fordham's mother, ma'am."

Miss Postlethwaite frowned with the effort to remember. She was a young woman of wide interests and manifold activities, and she took herself more seriously than those who knew her only as a "society" girl imagined.

"That doesn't help me much," she confessed. "I don't recall a Wallace Fordham, either. Mother, do you know a Wallace Fordham?"

The elder woman looked up from the book she was reading. "Wasn't Fordham the name of that unpleasant young man from the west that brought you a letter from Mr. Fairfax?" she asked.

"Of course!" Memory returned in a flash to Miss Postlethwaite. "I remember now. Mr. Fairfax wrote that he was the only son of his mother and that she was a widow and that he was about to come to New York to restore the family fortunes. I got father to give him a clerkship. He was, as you say, rather—er—unprepossessing. He was from the west somewhere—Indiana, I believe. I wonder what his mother wants."

Mrs. Postlethwaite yawned. "Probably she wants you to get a better place for her hope and pride. Better not see her!"

"Oh! Yes! I'll see her, if only to get it over with. What does she look like, James?"

"Well, ma'am!" The butler seemed to be at a loss for words. "Well, ma'am, I should say she was a lady, ma'am; but a backwoods lady, ma'am, if you'll excuse the expression, ma'am. From the provinces somewhere, ma'am."

"Say that I'll be down immediately."

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As the butler went out Miss Postlethwaite crossed to the telephone and rang up her father's office.

"Is that you, dad?" she asked, when connection had been made.

A man's voice, big and booming, answered in the affirmative; and she hurried on.

"You remember that young Fordham I got you to give a place to some months ago? His mother has just called. I don't know what she wants, but I thought I'd better find out something about her son before I saw her. How is he coming on?"

Mr. Postlethwaite laughed shortly. "He isn't coming on at all," he declared. "Honestly, Sally! He's the limit."

"What's the trouble?"

"Oh! General inefficiency. Goes to sleep over his books and makes all sorts of blunders. His appearance is a disgrace to the office. He isn't even respectable looking; and moreover, he shows no signs of improvement. I don't know what he does with his money."

"What do you pay him, dad?"

"Twelve dollars a week; and I've just learned that he earns three dollars more by night work somewhere. I guess that's what makes him so sleepy in the day. I've warned him once more to-day, and if he doesn't brace up I'll have to fire him. I'd have done so already if he hadn't been one of your protégés!"

"Thank you, dad! But you mustn't let me interfere. I know almost nothing about him, you know. Good-by."

As Miss Postlethwaite entered the parlor a little old woman with faded blue eyes set in a small anxious face, rose to meet her. Miss Postlethwaite looked her over in one swift but comprehensive glance that read the story told by the old-fashioned gown, evidently made by a country dressmaker or at home; the cheeks lined by time or by anxiety; the toil-roughened hand she offered; and so reading, did not hesitate a single instant in placing her. Mrs. Fordham was very clearly a lady, though not a city one.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, mentally, "How on earth did her son come to be such an offensive little brute?"

"Mrs. Fordham!" she greeted, "I am Miss Postlethwaite. Won't you sit down?"

"Thank you!" The old lady hesitated for an instant. Miss Postlethwaite had the preposterous notion that she had expected to be kissed. Then she sat down, and frankly studied her hostess. Her whole expression was one of surprise. Miss Postlethwaite was used to admiration, but something besides admiration showed

in the old lady's eyes. Hurriedly she asked if her visitor had long been in the city.

The old lady shook her head. "No!" she answered. "I only got here this morning. I left Evansville yesterday and came straight through. It's a long trip for an old woman like me, and I never would have come if it hadn't been for Wallace and you!"

Miss Postlethwaite looked rather blank. She had forgotten for an instant that the name of Mrs. Fordham's son was Wallace. Besides, the joining of his name with hers struck her oddly.

"Your son must have been glad to see you," she ventured.

Mrs. Fordham nodded slowly. "He would be," she agreed, "but I haven't seen him yet, and I don't reckon I will, though it 'most breaks my heart not to. I came on to see you."

"Oh!" Miss Postlethwaite could not understand. Her caller seemed to have in mind something to which she had no clue. "I'm glad you did," she added vaguely.

"You would be, of course. You'd be glad to see anybody that was kin to Wallace. I only hope you won't hate me when I go. I don't want you to hate me. I don't want you to feel hard against me. I don't want to say anything to hurt you—I couldn't want to hurt anybody that Wallace thinks so much of—and yet I'm dreadfully afraid I'm going to. If I do, you'll understand it ain't because I want to, but because I just must, won't you, deary?" There was no mistaking the anxiety in the old lady's tones.

The situation was away beyond Miss Postlethwaite. She was beginning to wonder if her caller was entirely right in her mind.

"I'm sure you won't say anything to hurt me," she answered, mechanically.

"I ain't so sure. I've got some pretty hard things to say and I don't know how to say them so's they won't hurt. I tried to write them, but I never was much of a hand at writing, and the more I tried the more mixed up the letters got. You can't put sorrow and love and pity and—and—determination—all in a letter—at least I can't. That's why I got on the train and came on here. I thought if I could see you and talk to you right from my heart, maybe I could make you understand. But now I'm here I don't know how to begin. You being so beautiful and so sweet-looking and so different from what I expected makes it dreadfully hard."

Miss Postlethwaite gasped. What on earth was the woman driving at? "Thank you!" she murmured, a trifle sarcastically.

The old lady must have caught the intonation, for she drew back! "There!" she bewailed. "I've begun wrong. I'd ought to have

begun with Wallace. You don't mind if I tell you something about him, do you? It'll help you to understand."

"No! I don't mind." It was true. Miss Postlethwaite had gotten beyond minding. But what was it that she was to be helped to understand?

"He was the dearest baby—so pretty and sweet and good. He almost never cried. And when Mr. Fordham died he was such a comfort. He was only six years old then, but I know he understood and tried to help me. He's always been that way. But of course you know that."

Miss Postlethwaite repressed a wild desire to laugh. A vision of Wallace Fordham, with his little fishy eyes, his insignificant nose, his common features, dressed in baby clothes, rose in her mind's eye.

"After Mr. Fordham died, I had mighty hard times. I guess you wouldn't understand how hard if I told you. But Wallace was such a comfort. He learned so quick and was so good and so popular—even you could hardly think how popular. He was the leader in everything that was good and right. And it wasn't only with the boys; the girls were just as fond of him. You can understand that. And it wasn't because he could do things for them. Wallace never did have any money to do things. While he was at home he gave me every cent he earned—every cent. Of course since he's been in New York he hasn't been able to do that, but he's sent me eight dollars a week from the first, and he's been sending me ten dollars a week for a good while now. He'd have sent more if he hadn't had to buy such expensive clothes. Your father insisted on it, and I guess he was right. People seem to think a lot of dress here."

Miss Postlethwaite wrinkled her pretty brows. If Wallace Fordham sent his mother ten dollars or even eight dollars a week, he would very obviously have little left out of earnings of twelve or fifteen dollars a week. It was rather admirable, she thought, even if it was suicidal. But why had he lied about his clothes; very certainly he had not bought many of them.

But Mrs. Fordham was running on. "When he wrote me that you had persuaded your father to make him cashier at such a fine salary, I wrote back that he must try to show you how grateful he was and that he must take you to a show once in a while and to send you a box of candy now and then and all that. Our people always held up their heads with the best and Wallace had the right to do the same."

Miss Postlethwaite said nothing. The thought of Wallace Ford-

ham taking her to a "show" or buying her candy was so wildly preposterous that she almost overlooked the ridiculous falsehood about his being made cashier. Evidently the young man was a monumental liar. The discovery let a ray of light into the situation. Without doubt he had been deceiving his mother; the latter's extraordinary remarks were not hallucinations, but were based on information given by him.

Mrs. Fordham's next words brought matters to a climax. "You didn't understand, of course!" she went on, "and I guess that was how it came about. Wallace never meant anything but just gratitude. Really he didn't! He never—oh! I don't know how to go on, but I've got to—he never meant you to think he was in love with you—"

"What!"

"No! He didn't! He never did!" insisted the old lady. "He's always been in love with Mary Barrett, who lives next door to us; and she's always been in love with him. He never meant to be unfaithful to her. He told me so, and I know it's true, for Wallace never told a lie in his life. I guess you just swept him off his feet for a minute and I don't wonder, you being so sweet and lovely and good, for I know from looking at you that you must be all of them. But, oh, my dear, you ain't got any right to Wallace. He belongs to Mary Barrett. I guess Wallace ain't told you about Mary—Wallace is so gentle; he hates to hurt anybody. But it's true. He belongs to Mary and I know that now you know it you won't take him away from her. Will you, deary?"

Miss Postlethwaite sat up very straight. This incredible, this preposterous thing was really true. "Do you mean to say that your son sent you to ask me to—to—" Words failed Miss Postlethwaite.

"No! No! No! No, indeed. Wallace don't know a thing about my coming," protested the old lady. "But I knew from his letters that he was afraid your heart was set on him and that you wouldn't let him go. But I knew you would when you knew. Besides, you and Wallace ain't a bit suited to each other and never could be happy together. It ain't that I mind so much about your father's business, though I never did want Wallace to go into it. The Fordhams always were honest folks and always were hard set against any form of gambling, whether they call it stock-broking or something else. But it ain't that; it's the different ways you two have been brought up. Wallace has always been God-fearing and sober and industrious. I don't reckon he's been up later'n nine o'clock a dozen times in his life. An' here I read in the

papers of you going to balls night after night and going to horse shows and up in aeroplanes and all sorts of things. Wallace sent me the papers. Wallace says it's all right for you to do such things. He would say so, of course. But Wallace can't stand any such life as that; he's always been delicate and it would kill him in no time. Course I know you love Wallace and it'll come hard on you to give him up, but it won't do, deary. It won't do!"

"What won't do?" Miss Postlethwaite ought to have understood, of course. Mrs. Fordham's words were plain enough. But they were so amazing to Miss Postlethwaite that she really could not take them in. "What won't do?" she repeated.

"Why! Your marrying Wallace, of course!" It was the old woman's time to be surprised.

"Oh! Your son actually wrote you that he was to marry me?"

"Of course. Wallace always writes me everything. Oh! I know it's a secret and I'm glad it is, for it makes it easier to break off. But Wallace told me, of course. Wallace has told me everything all his life."

Hot resentment held Miss Postlethwaite dumb. The outrageous exploitation of her name made her blind with anger. The cad! The inexpressible little cad! If he had been a big man, or a strong man, or even a wicked man, she might not have resented the imposture so bitterly. But that this insignificant milksop, this goody-goody boy, this unkempt sloven, should have dared to couple her name with his made her positively dizzy with rage.

For a moment she could not distinguish her visitor's words. Slowly the ringing in her ears subsided, and once more she began to listen.

"—so that's why I came," Mrs. Fordham was saying. "I know you'll find it hard to give him up—anybody would. But it's better to have a sharp wrench and be done with it than to marry and repent all your lives. You're awful pretty, but you ain't suited to Wallace, deary. I knew you weren't when I read the stories in the paper. You'll forgive my saying so, won't you? Wallace is all I've got, you know, and I've got to think of him first. You wouldn't have me do anything else, would you?"

The mother's voice broke; and quite suddenly Miss Postlethwaite realized that what at best was a passing irritation for her was a matter of life and death for her visitor. The denunciation on the tip of her tongue died unspoken. The boy deserved no pity, but it was impossible to punish him without piercing his mother's heart. Could she do that? Even while she marvelled at the mother love

that could so idealize such a subject, Miss Postlethwaite felt that she could not destroy that mother's faith. And yet she could not rest under such an imputation!

Mrs. Fordham rambled on: "Wallace ain't a bit suited to you. He ain't suited to New York, for all he's made such a success. And I don't want him to stay in New York, though I'm glad he came and showed them at home what he could do. It would have 'most broke my heart if he'd failed. There were folks at home—not many but some—that said mighty mean things about Wallace. They said his father was no good and that Wallace was just like him. Of course"—a spot of color burned in the old lady's cheeks—"of course his father would have made good if he had lived a little longer and I always knew that Wallace would make good some day. But people wouldn't believe it and at last I told Wallace he'd have to come on here and show everybody. And he came, and he *has* made good so splendidly, and now I want him to come home."

Miss Postlethwaite drew a long breath. She was blessed with imagination, and all at once she visualized the situation—saw the weak, incapable youth, idolized by his mother, coming to the great city to try to justify that mother's faith; saw him struggling on, frightened half to death, totally unfitted for his work, wearing his shabby clothes, living on next to nothing, working night and day, that he might be able to send home enough money to enable her to ease her sore heart by silencing his detractors; saw him heaping up falsehood after falsehood, all in the effort to prove that he would make good—heaping them up until they had crashed down by their own weight. As the pictures unfolded before Miss Postlethwaite, all thought of punishment fled. The offense against herself dwindled. Certainly it was not gross enough to call for vengeance, especially if that vengeance was to involve the sacrifice of his mother's love and trust. Yet something must be said and done! What should it be?

While she hesitated the butler came in with a card. Like Mrs. Fordham's it was a written one, evidently prepared by a writer on the sidewalk. Miss Postlethwaite studied it in silence, looking from it to Mrs. Fordham and back again.

"Did he ask for me, James?" she inquired.

"He asked if his mother was here, ma'am; and when I said yes, she was with you, ma'am, he got quite white and asked to see you, ma'am."

"Very well. You may show him in."

Miss Postlethwaite turned to Mrs. Fordham. "Your son has

called, Mrs. Fordham," she said. "He knows that you are here and wants to see you. I have sent for him to come in."

The old lady started up, face aglow. As she gained her feet Wallace Fordham came pushing through the portières, and hurried toward her. He did not see Miss Postlethwaite and evidently did not know she was in the room. For the moment mother and son had no thoughts for any one except each other.

Miss Postlethwaite watched them amazedly. On the two or three previous occasions when she had seen Wallace Fordham he had been awkward, clumsy, laughing loudly and nervously out of sheer anxiety to appear at ease. This time he was different; Miss Postlethwaite noted the change instantly. His clothes were as ill-fitting as ever, and were even more soiled and worn. His features were no less insignificant than before. But when he looked at his mother his face shone with something that raised him above the common level. For the first time Miss Postlethwaite noticed how alike the two were. No one who saw them together could doubt the relationship. Whatever this boy had done, however he had lied, she was convinced that he had done it to make his mother happy. A sudden and somewhat surprising determination to help him and to save the old lady her illusions shaped itself in Miss Postlethwaite's mind.

She heard the two speaking and came out of her reverie to listen to them. She heard the mother's anxious voice exclaiming that the son's clothes were too thin for the prevailing bitter weather, and demanding what he had done with the fine things he had bought. She heard the son hesitate, stammer, then desperately explain that his lodgings had been burned only a day or two before and all his clothes destroyed. She heard the mother cry out that he was thin and ill; and she heard him assert that it was only that he had to labor hard to do his responsible work.

When at last the mother remembered where they were, she spoke to the boy and he turned and saw Miss Postlethwaite.

At the sight, he blanched pitifully. Into his eyes there came the look of a trapped animal that sees the hunter baring his knife. Then as the blow did not instantly fall the color crept slowly back to his face. He said no word but his eyes implored pity.

Miss Postlethwaite spoke slowly, choosing each word carefully. "Your mother came to see me an hour ago—Wallace," she said, balking a little at the name but getting it out finally. "She has told me a good many things that have surprised me. She wants you to go back home with her. I did not quite understand at first, or I would have told her that you had already planned to go home. I would

have told her, too, that I had nearly made a great mistake, but that I understood things better now. I would have told her that you have been working too hard and that your health has suffered so that my father had been compelled to accept your resignation, paying you six months' salary in lieu of warning. I think the money is waiting for you now. If you will hurry down to the office, I will telephone that you are coming and I fancy that you will be able to settle up your affairs here and catch the evening train back home with your mother. I think it would be wise for you not to miss it on any account."

She turned to Mrs. Fordham. "Wallace is not well, Mrs. Fordham," she said. "You must take him home at once and make him well again. But don't let him come back to New York. The—er—climate here is trying and I do not think it agrees with him. Let me know when he marries Miss Barrett. I should like to send a remembrance."

"And you, deary?" The old lady spoke anxiously.

Miss Postlethwaite smiled. "I told you that I had realized that I nearly made a mistake. That was some time ago. You remember Mr. Fairfax—Wallace brought me a letter from him when he came on to New York some months ago? You remember him? Yes? Well! My engagement to him was announced in the papers yesterday."

The Road to Camelot.*

BY F. RONEY WEIR.

ER Brother George called her "The Lady of Shalott," but the name was a misnomer, because she could not take "three paces thro' the room," but must just sit weaving her webs of red and white and pink shawls; the pink for Cousin Emmeline with the tender brown eyes, the red for Aunt Sarah with her gipsy skin and sallow cheeks, the white for grandma. But Brother George said The Lady might only watch other lovers moving down to Camelot, and the name fitted. So he rigged a light table that she could pull across her lap and rest her elbows upon when she held her field glasses and watched passers-by on the road.

It was surprising how much of life one could glimpse on a country road connecting two sizable towns.

This particular morning The Lady was entirely alone. Business or pleasure had taken every other member of the family out of the house, and the first to return, as The Lady knew, would be Tilly, the maid, at three o'clock.

It had never happened that way before, and Brother George said it should never happen again, but The Lady declared she should read and knit, and look through her field glasses at the people passing, and never realize her loneliness until Tilly came home. But, somehow, the heroine of the story was such a—oh—I don't know, and the hero was so—so—well—I can't explain it, that she shut up the book with a bang and took her knitting, which, in turn, she presently laid aside for her field glasses.

Brother George had placed her chair back from the window that she might avoid the glare of the sun on the river just across the road, yet near enough to command a fine stretch of highway through the field glasses.

Away to the west she saw a little old man coming, bobbing along at a rapid pace. When he was near enough The Lady could see that he was bent, and stiff, and rheumatic; that his coat was shabby, his

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hat battered and grey. But he seemed to be walking on springs. His wrinkled old cheeks glowed, his sunken, colorless lips were stretched into something resembling a grin, his eyes gleamed—of course at that distance she could not be just sure about this, but she imagined she could—his eyes gleamed with pleasant excitement. His cane struck the path with jubilant little stabs, swung up youthfully and pounded down again, as if the user were advancing aerially, and merely using the cane to punctuate his progress. The Lady of Shalott wondered what it was which enabled the old man to forget age, ugliness, rheumatism, so completely.

She was philosophising on the unreasonableness of happiness—fleeing from those who had lovers and automobiles, and abiding at times with the feeble and the aged, when just in front of her gate, the old traveler met an acquaintance. Then The Lady was let into the tremendous secret.

From an inside pocket the old man took out a bloated wallet. It was not the accustomed state of this purse, such a musty, fusty, ancient thing as it was, used to hovering about seventy-five cents, or, at most, a dollar and a half at a time. Now it fairly bulged. The field glasses made visible to The Lady the trembling joy in the withered old fingers that unclasped and displayed the contents, then strapped and buckled it snugly and replaced it in an inside pocket of his coat.

The friend showed delighted surprise. He asked questions. The old man explained. He measured off height, length, breadth, depth. He was certainly going to build a house with the money in the fat pocket-book. The Lady could discern not only the sloping roof of the house, but the garden also, with a young apple tree, a row of currant bushes, and a blackberry vine on the fence. She was in a hazy dream of delight as the friends shook hands and separated. The spring birds were singing, and every little sharp green blade of daffodil down the sides of the garden path breathed hope and anticipation.

The sun was fiercely warm, as it is apt to be in the first spring days. It was so warm that the old man took off his coat and hung it over his arm.

Then The Lady of Shalott thought she saw a pitiful sight. She could not be sure, but it seemed to her as if the fat pocket-book slipped from the inverted coat-pocket to the ground, while the old man trudged joyfully out of sight.

She hoped she had been mistaken; she could not bear to think of the expression on that wrinkled old face when its owner should dis-

cover his loss. That dear little house and spreading garden gone like the shadows in a dream. Oh, that she could patter down the stairs and out at the gate and down the road to convince herself that she had been mistaken. But instead she must sit and dread the worst.

A man drove by in a motor car, but he whirled along with his eyes fastened on the road. He was exceeding the speed limit, and entirely absorbed in the pleasure of breaking the law. Two men came up from Camelot—or rather, two beings who thought they were men, or hoped to be, as The Lady discerned through her glasses. They were very young, but they were tall for their age, and they smoked cigarettes. They were on the pocket-book side of the road. They were swaggering along with their hands in their pockets. The Lady hoped they would not find the wallet. They did not look like boys who were trustworthy.

Oh, for Tilly's big, broad feet with which to go running out to the road, and demand the old man's property!

The boys saw the wallet; they stopped, they bent, they straightened up and hee-hawed like donkeys. They looked up at The Lady's window, and grinned mockingly. Then one of them raised a toe, and the wallet flopped through the air like a wounded chicken.

It fell just in front of The Lady's gate. The two who thought they were men—or hoped to be—passed on, smoking their cigarettes, and no one else came in sight for a long half hour save another lawbreaker, with his fixed eye and reckless heart, who would not have noticed a roaring lion unless its scrunching bones had punctured his rubber tires.

If it would only rain! But it was such a perfectly dazzling day that everybody would go to, or come from Camelot.

At noon the school children began to swarm past. There was no longer room for hope. Children have eyes like ferrets; they see everything.

They saw the wallet—a half dozen at once. One little girl picked it up, but her older sister slapped it out of her hands and scolded her roundly for touching it. She brushed off the little one's pinafore, boxed her ears, and sent her forward wailing.

One group of boys footballed it into the road, another sent it skidding out of range of the field glasses.

The Lady settled back in despair. It had gone beyond the ken of her friendly eyes. Now that it was out of her sight she tried to thrust it from her thoughts. She turned to her web, but wooden needles and white wool were no panacea for her excited mind.

Suddenly, "Tirra Lirra by the river" came Sedley's puppy, from

three farms below. In his mouth he bore the begrimed wallet.

Being a little, mud-colored puppy, he was careful to settle with his quarry in the very middle of the path of the speed-exceeders. Here he held the wallet between his forepaws and began to chew the corner with the ecstatic expression of a gourmet tasting a new delicacy.

Oh, but it was terrible to be The Lady of Shalott and obliged to sit helpless while a puppy ate up a house and garden!

She called as loudly as she could; she screamed. In desperation she threw the field glasses straight through the window. She heard them clatter on the ground below.

The puppy heard, too. He cocked one dust-colored ear, turned a round, innocent eye upward a moment—then returned to his chewing again.

Suddenly The Lady saw the bent figure of the owner of the wallet come opposite the gate. He was without his cane and coat. He was stumbling along in a dazed, miserable, ineffectual haste, all the hope and happiness gone from him. Like the law-breakers, his eyes were bent upon the path he himself was traveling, the path he had traversed with hope so short a time before. A mud-colored puppy in the middle of the road was, to him, a mud-colored puppy, and it was nothing more.

If only she could put her mouth close to the hole in the window she might make him hear!

"She left the web, she left the loom, she made three paces thro' the room." She grasped the ledge of the window-sill with clutching fingers, and drew herself up until her mouth came opposite the hole in the glass; then she shouted desperately.

The old man turned, caught sight of the puppy, recognized the article upon which it was feasting, and made a dive for it. Up jumped the puppy, grabbed the wallet, and set out for home, three farms below, a dirty, wabbling streak in the middle of the road, the old man hot on his trail—but a long way behind.

"I am half sick of shadows," murmured The Lady of Shalott as her hold weakened on the sill and she rolled on the floor.

The next she knew, everybody was home; her father and mother and Brother George and Sister Alice and Tilly, the maid. There was a combined odor of camphor, arnica, smelling-salts, and alcohol in the air, and someone was saying the doctor had come.

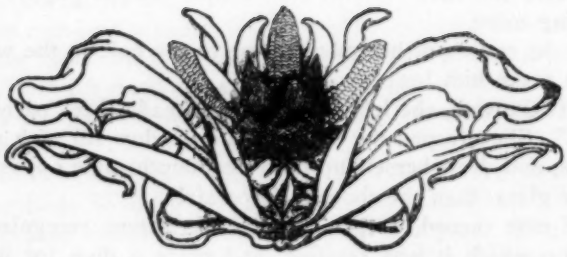
"How did you get away over under the window?" was the universal question they asked when they realized that she was awake once more and could answer them.

"I walked!" she declared triumphantly. "I 'made three paces thro' the room'; and what I did once I know I can do again. Stand aside and let me try!"

She did it again, and it seemed too good to be true.

"But what I can't understand," she gasped, after her second successful trial, "is why no one carried off the wallet," and she told the whole story.

"You little goose Lady," gibed Brother George, "don't you remember it is the first day of April?"



Ethelwynda the Posthumous.*

BY W. VAUGHAN PETTIT.

PEOPLE may laugh as they like; I contend that every widower should live on as good terms with his wife's ghost as he possibly can, and I shall live up to my convictions. I don't suppose a greater nagger than my late lamented ever lived. She was completely the artist, combining natural aptitude with all the resources of a finished technique to produce the maximum of emotional effect. Yet why should that prevent me from fulfilling my present duty,—to gratify her posthumous longings as well as I am able?

Ethelwynda was her name. Fact! I never was more serious in my life. Doesn't it call up visions of a fair, oval face, with wide, innocent eyes and a wealth of golden hair? There you have her! That's just the way she used to look. But doesn't it also call up visions of a sweet, trustful disposition, of thoughts gentle as the fragrance of a flower, of love and lamplight, carpet slippers and a pipe before the fire?

Stop your romancing now—that isn't Ethelwynda at all. Parents should be more careful about the names they bestow, not only for the children's sake, but because of their possible effect on others. The matrimonially inclined male gets a pig sufficiently in a poke under the best of circumstances, and to endow a girl with a name that is an additional and unnecessary stimulant to self-delusion is positively immoral.

One evening, about a month after the funeral, I sat in my library examining the various designs which had been submitted for a memorial stone. It was very evident that none of them would do; even the few not altogether devoid of beauty betrayed hackneyed inspiration and commonplace thought. One and all, they lacked the significance of the personal touch, the subtle suggestion, the kind of thing which always made my advertisements of Blum's Eucalyptic Soap attract and hold.

I should have to design the thing myself, that was clear—and with

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the resolve, pop! frisking into my head out of the void, as all truly original ideas do, came the great conceit. Within half an hour I had sketched it out and was printing the usual mortuary inscription: Ethelwynda Grimes, beloved wife of Gregory Blum, etc., then the dates. Her epitaph I had already chosen: *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.*

While thus occupied, I was startled to hear a sniff proceeding from where I had supposed was nothing but empty room. There was a familiar ring about it by which I immediately recognized the sniffer. It was Ethelwynda without a doubt, but as I had always made it my rule never to permit her to see that she could surprise me, I continued my work without looking up.

"What can I do for you, my treasure?" I questioned mildly.

"In the first place, just tell me what those words mean." The tones were portentous,—her regulation two-o'clock-in-the-morning tones, which I had come to recognize as inevitable whenever I failed to mount the stairs without stumbling.

"Well, my idol, my rosebud, to tell the truth—"

"If you can."

"—It is a Latin phrase signifying—if you can't boost the deceased, don't knock her. How do you like it?"

Another sniff.

"Personally I consider it wonderfully appropriate," I continued. "It expresses resignation as well as forbearance, and manages to convey a sense of loss without any sentimental violation of truth. I consider it dignified."

Receiving no reply, I ventured to look around. I had always prided myself on seeing through Ethelwynda quite clearly, but never before had she been quite so transparent as she now appeared. The back of her chair was almost as visible as if empty—yet there she undoubtedly was. She had on her second-best black silk, the one with the peach stains, and the yellowish old lace collar that she always wore when she wished to make her face appear less parchmentlike. Nothing was changed. Not even the curious little droop of the cheek which gave somewhat the effect one sees on a work-worn horse. Most deceiving thing, that droop. Nearly everybody took it to denote patience.

"Can't you make it a little nicer than that, Gregory?" The descent to pleading set me wondering—then I remembered she no longer had any earthly claim.

"Why should I, my angel?" I laid the trap suavely.

"Everybody does." She had stepped in.

"Ah yes,"—I could almost hear it snapping to,—"to be sure. There's nothing lends itself to lies like death, is there?" I leaned back in my chair. Outwardly I was calm and reflective, prepared to discuss an academic question; inwardly I was one prolonged, jubilant whoop. Many an old score was on the way to be settled, I could see that.

"Except soap advertisements. It would take all the cemetaries in the country to equal your record in them."

Now this was a sore subject. As greatgranddaughter to Ebenezer Plunkett, whose Puritan conscience had never allowed him to leave a neighbor alone, Ethelwynda had always quarreled with my use of imagination in writing "ads." How often have I come home after a hard day's work and found her in tears over some simple little statement in the evening paper to the effect that Blum's Eucalyptic was ninety-nine and a half per cent pure.

"We are not talking of soap advertisements," I answered petulantly, "but of wives' epitaphs. Could you rest easy knowing that the inscription on your tombstone was a work of fiction?"

"Why not?"

I stared at her in surprise. Was it possible that the realms beyond had actually endowed Ethelwynda with a human weakness?

"Oh, Gregory," she exclaimed, clasping her hands imploringly, "it would be so lovely to feel that I was being appreciated just once!"

"What is there for me to say?" I wore the air of one willing to be just. "I can't exactly describe you as a helpmate, can I?"

"You've never lacked an adjective for that soap in over thirty years; you oughtn't to have any difficulty in getting up a little puff."

"Like a good many other things, it is either comparatively easy, or it is absolutely impossible."

I arose and stood before her with my hands crossed beneath my coat tails. Five foot six and a forty-four waist hardly lend themselves to dignity of carriage, but I flatter myself I cut rather an imposing figure as I weighed her case judicially.

"Did it never occur to you that when a man is struggling to make a market for his product, and his wife forbids her washerwoman to use it merely because it rotted the clothes, that her action might tend to discourage him a little?"

"It was my duty to save your money, wasn't it?"

"Certainly! Yet why not do it and keep quiet about it? Oh, no! That was not your way, Ethelwynda. You had to harp on it. You had to rub it in. You had to do everything in your power to diminish my enthusiasm and deprive me of that element of faith so necessary to all success."

She was silenced.

"And then the atmosphere you created about the house, my dear,"—I had determined to speak out my mind at last, though more in sorrow than in anger,—"you really left me nothing to work for. Before I was worth one hundred thousand dollars you had become a Plymouth Sister, and by the time I was able to afford a country seat you were devoted to at least eight cats."

"But your methods were on my conscience, Gregory."

"Yet now you wish me to apply those same methods to your tombstone."

Womanlike, she ignored the obvious touch.

"I was always afraid our union would not be eternal. I was afraid that you would be eternally damned and I left alone in Heaven."

"My precious, if you begin that sort of thing again I shall have to sit on you." I was growing quite angry.

"You haven't the effrontery."

"Your etymology is weak, my own; I never sit with my effrontery," and I proceeded to do so.

I might just as well have sat on air for all the good it did me. My trousers had hardly touched upholstery before I saw her smiling at me from the chair I had just vacated. I glared helplessly for a moment, then, remembering that ghosts can't abide tobacco, I lit a cigar.

Nevertheless, when I went up to my bedroom, there she was, already ensconced in the four-poster. That's the worst feature of being haunted by a wife—there's no such thing as privacy.

"Now this won't do, lambkin," I expostulated; "really it won't. You have no right to come intruding around after being properly buried. It isn't etiquette."

She stretched herself luxuriously and pulled the bedclothes up under her chin.

"Come now! go back to your grave like a good girl."

"It's much cosier here."

"But I can't think of going to bed while you're there. You'd draw all my heat and give me rheumatism. It'd be worse than damp sheets."

She yawned and turned over on her side. "Sit up then," she said. She had never been very strong on repartee. About the only controversial weapon she had ever mastered was the ability to sit tight.

I couldn't very well smoke all night, so there was nothing for it but to draw up a chair and light the fire. Nevertheless I could not refrain from one caustic comment: "You promised me so often you were going to a better world and we should never see each other again. I should think you would be ashamed not to keep your word."

There was no reply.

At the end of two hours the fire was out and I had become very drowsy. Moreover, the chair was becoming cantankerous and less and less inclined to let me sleep.

"Honey-bun," I whispered softly.

"Yes?" The wretch! she hadn't been asleep at all.

"What you ask involves a tremendous sacrifice, you know."

"But sacrifice is noble, Gregory. Sacrifice is superb. Think of all the heroes in the history books; they are immortal because of the sacrifices they made."

"I was not thinking of that kind of sacrifice, my precious. I was thinking of the sacrifice of truth."

"Sacrifice is always sacrifice."

I heaved a sigh. "Very well, pussykins," I said, "tomorrow I shall place the order for a monument to cost the net profit on a million cakes of soap."

"And the inscription, Gregory?" she cried anxiously, "you'll write it in your best style?"

"You may rest assured that it will be worthy of the creator of Blum's Eucalyptic," I answered. "It shall be my masterpiece."

A moment's silence. She might at least have thanked me.

"What do you say to a memorial window too?"

"A memorial window, my love?"

"Yes. Something in stained glass with my name in big letters right in the middle."

I reflected.

Suddenly she broke out in a torrent of words: "Please, Gregory, please! You don't know what I've suffered all these years. I was jealous of that soap,—positively green! It wasn't only that you didn't appreciate me, for nobody ever has, but I couldn't pick up a newspaper or a magazine; I couldn't go out in the street; I couldn't ride in a car, without the virtues of the only thing you

really loved hitting my eyes like a blow. If you only had praised a meal now and then, or noticed how nice I looked, but no! every atom of applause in you was spent on soap. I want to be appreciated now. I sha'n't rest quiet till I get it, and I mean to have it, Please!"

I was deeply touched. How much might have been spared both of us had I realised that love for me had been the mainspring of all her captiousness.

"Kittylittles," I said gently, "you may have a dozen windows if you like."

I heard something between a zephyr and a sniffle, and she was gone. I filled a hot-water bottle and went to bed.

The next morning I had the old four-poster put in the attic, and installed a pair of modern twin beds. After that I didn't mind a bit when she came to hear how the monument was getting along. In fact, I found her much more human than she had ever been in the flesh, and we grew quite chummy.

It was during her subsequent visits that Ethelwynda persuaded me to erect the many beautiful memorial statues which now dot the country from Maine to California, and about which there has been such a to-do in the papers of late. My! My! to think of the pleasure I have given that woman!

Most of the towns willing to have their public places embellished by an unknown philanthropist knew nothing about either of us, so I was able to give free rein to my imagination and, in consequence, the inscriptions on the monuments were only surpassed by the data I furnished the orators employed for the ceremony of unveiling.

Sometimes I had her die while rescuing a batch of orphans from a fire, sometimes while nursing little sick Chinks in Chinatown, and once I made her plunge boldly off a ferry boat after a cat. The orator on that occasion was a failure though he cost me a thousand dollars. In spite of the pathos in his voice I noticed that many of the crowd got to grinning, but Ethelwynda didn't seem to mind. She sat on the platform with enough moisture coursing down her cheeks to float a battleship, let alone a ferry-boat, and told me afterwards she considered it the very best unveiling we had ever had.

The newspapers seem to be pretty well agreed that I have been crazed by grief; some of them have even been kind enough to hint that the disease was brought on by remorse for my unkindness to the defunct while she was alive. Let them think so! I know

better. I contend, with Hamlet, that no man was ever good and mad but thinking made him so. If people wish to delude themselves into believing me unsound, let them. But let them also take a glance at the sales of Blum's Eucalyptic which have nearly doubled in the last three years.

Ethelwynda's visits have become rather rare of late. My doctor has a fool idea that it is due to his prescriptions; but, bless you! that's just an hallucination of his. You see, I have employed a valet whom he recommended, and make the fellow sleep in the twin bed. In spite of all her faults, Ethelwynda, in some respects, was always as modest and retiring as her name.

A Professional Recall.*

BY REX T. STOUT

THEY met at Quinby's unexpectedly, for the first time in three months, and after the handshake proceeded to their old table in the corner.

"Well, how goes it?" asked Bendy.

"Bendy," said Dudd Bronson, ignoring the question, "I am the greatest man in the world. I myself am for ham and cabbage, since it tickles my feelings, but if you want anything from peacocks' hearts to marmalade, it's on me."

Bendy stared at the roll of bills Dudd brought out of his trousers' pocket. "Dudd," he said, his voice trembling, "I respect you. Please put it in your breast pocket so I can see the bulge. What was the occurrence?"

"I hate to tell it," declared Dudd. "Bendy, I am a modest man. When you admire me most, remember I said that.

"The pity of it is that there was no one to watch me. I done it in solitude.

"One day, about two weeks ago, I walks into the sanctum of David Jetmore. Jetmore is the best lawyer in Horton, over in Jersey. He's one of them fat, bulgy men that looks right through you with a circumambious gaze.

" 'Mr. Jetmore,' says I, 'my name is Abe Delman. I been running it a store over in Pauline with my brother Leo. We had a fight over a personal matter which ain't to the purpose, and when Leo began lookin' for me in an unpeaceful manner I came away for my health. Now I want to get my half of the store which I am broke till I get it, and you should write to Leo's lawyer, who is Mr. Devlin of Ironton, about a settlement.'

" 'Have you something for a retainer?' asks Jetmore.

" 'No,' says I, 'I'm livin' at a hotel.'

" 'I'm a busy man,' says Jetmore, 'and how do I know I'll get any money?'

" 'Mr. Jetmore,' says I, 'that store's worth three thousand dollars

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if it's worth a cent. And if my half ain't enough, maybe you can get Leo to give you some of his.'

"Finally, after I explained promiscuously why I had to keep at an unsafe distance from brother Leo, and other delicate points, Jetmore says he'll take the job. When he says Devlin, Leo's lawyer in Ironton, is a personal friend of his, I told him that made it all the better, but I had a mental reserve about the *espree dee corpse.*

"That same afternoon about four hours later I walks into Devlin's office in Ironton.

" 'Mr. Devlin,' says I, 'my name is Leo Delman. I been running it a store over in Pauline with my brother Abe. We had a fight over a personal matter which ain't to the purpose, and Abe left for parts unknown without my blessing. Two days ago comes a letter from Abe's lawyer, Mr. Jetmore of Horton, about Abe's share in the store, which he didn't wait to take with him, and I told him to write to you, because you should make it a settlement for me.'

"Bendy, these lawyers is all the same. All they think about is what's in it for them. They're parasites, Bendy. They're a menace to society.

" 'Have you something for a retainer?' asks Devlin.

" 'Mr. Devlin,' says I, 'I have not.'

" 'Then,' says he, 'how do you expect to settle with brother Abe?'

"Bendy, I know you won't repeat this to any of our friends, or I wouldn't tell it. It fills me with shame, Bendy, when I remember that fifty I handed to Devlin. These lawyers is the worst kind of grafters.

"I told Devlin I didn't want any Pauline natives to know about mine and Abe's intimate pertinacities, and I waits in Ironton for a settlement. As soon as he got my fifty he wrote off a long letter to Jetmore which he let me read to correct the sentiments.

"It would a' been cheaper for me to buy that railroad between Ironton and Horton. For eleven days I kept up a to and fro movement worse than a Mount Vernon commuter. It got so the trains wouldn't start till they saw me comin'. In one day I was Abe three times and Leo twice.

"Jetmore and Devlin kept burnin' up the mails with lies and criminalities, me a readin' everything so as to preserve my interests. I was yellin' for more on one end and less on the other till the fruit got all ripe and just ready for pickin'. Bendy, it was shameful easy. I used to fall asleep in Devlin's office from sheer *angwee.*

"It was last Thursday when I got to Devlin's sanctum just in time to see him puttin' on his coat to go to lunch with the stenographer.

"'Hello, Delman,' says he, 'I'll see you in about half-an-hour. Here's a letter from Jetmore. Make yourself at home till I get back.'

"When he'd gone I read the letter over just to make sure there wasn't no changes since I saw it the night before in Jetmore's office. It said that Abe had decided to accept Leo's offer of twelve hundred dollars cash, provided it was paid within three days.

"I goes to the stenographer's desk, picks out a nice printed letter-head, and writes on it as follows:

March 21, 1912.

Mr. David Jetmore,
Horton, N. J.

Dear Sir,—

As per advice contained in your favor of the 20th inst., I am enclosing herewith check for twelve hundred dollars in full payment of the claim of Abe Delman against Leo Delman.

I shall be pleased to have you acknowledge receipt of same.

Yours very truly,

"I had already practiced Devlin's hand till I was sick of it, and I signed that letter so that Devlin himself couldn't a' told the difference. Then I pulls out a blank check, makes it to the order of Devlin for twelve hundred dollars and signs it 'Leo Delman' and endorses Devlin's name on the back.

"Of course, I could have done some of this work in my own boodwar, but I wanted to use Devlin's typewriter, and besides, I had a feeling it would be more gentleman-like to do everything right there in the office. It somehow seemed natural and right to sign a man's name on his own desk with his own pen and ink.

"When Devlin come back I had the letter all ready to mail stowed away in my pocket.

"'Have you got that twelve hundred?' says he.

"'No,' says I, 'but I'll get it in three days or bust.'

"'You'd better,' says he, 'for when Jetmore says three days he don't mean four.'

"I mailed the letter and check in Ironton that afternoon, and next day—that was Friday— I goes over to Horton on the very first train, and pedestrinates into Jetmore's office on the stroke of ten.

"Jetmore met me cordial like a mule that's just found something to kick. He'd smelled my money.

" 'Did you get it?' says I.

"He pulled out the check I'd mailed in Ironton the day before. I looked at it over his shoulder, him holdin' on with both hands.

" 'I guess about fifty of that belongs to you,' says I.

" 'Fifty!' says he. 'Fifty!'

" 'No,' says I, 'I only said it once.'

"That's what comes of gettin' into the clutches of one of them grafters, Bendy. They'll do you every time. But I let it go at a hundred to preserve my own interests. I couldn't afford no argument.

" 'Well,' says I, 'give me the check.'

" 'Give me my hundred,' says he.

" 'I ain't got it,' says I.

" 'Then we'll cash the check,' says he, and puts on his coat and hat.

"Bendy, ain't that pitiful? Ain't it pitiful? It was comin' so easy I yawned right in his face. Says he, 'then we'll cash the check.' Oh, the big fat boob!

"We goes down to the bank, and Jetmore steps up to the window.

" 'Good-morning, Mr. Jetmore,' says the teller, obsequies-like.

"Jetmore takes a pen, endorses the check, and passes it through the window.

" 'Give it to us in hundreds,' says he.

" 'Not for me,' says I, steppin' up. 'Make it twenties.' You know, Bendy, centuries is all right, but they ain't enough of 'em. They're too scarce to be safe.

"The teller counts out ten twenties, slaps 'em on top of a pile with a bandage on 'em, and shoves 'em through the window to Jetmore. He counts off five and I sticks the rest in my pocket.

" 'Better count 'em,' says Jetmore.

" 'I'll take a chance,' says I. 'The young man looks honest.' The truth is, I was beginning to get the shivers. They always come on me when I feel the stuff.

"Me and Jetmore turned to go. Just as we reached the door I felt that pile of twenties jump right out of my pocket and slap me in the face. Standin' there lookin' at us was Devlin.

" 'Hello, Jetmore,' says he. 'Good-morning, Mr. Delman.'

"Bendy, stand up. No man can sit unrespectful while I relate the sequence. It fills my eyes with tears to think of it. I've been a modest man, but this is too much for me. I must tell the truth.

"I was in a hole, all right, but I still had hold of the rope. I knew that Devlin thinks I'm Leo and Jetmore thinks I'm Abe, and as long as they didn't get a chance to chin on it I was safe.

" 'Mr. Devlin,' says I, 'I'm glad to see you. There's a little matter I want to ask you about.'

"Jetmore started to spout before Devlin could answer and I interspersed.

" 'It's an important matter,' says I, 'and I won't keep you long.'

"Devlin stood lookin' at us like he didn't understand. Of course, Jetmore knew I knew Devlin, because I'd told him he was mine and Leo's lawyer before the fight.

"Jetmore pulls out his watch and starts to go.

" 'I've got an appointment,' says he. 'I'll see you later. Drop around to the office about one.' Then he turns to me. 'Come in and say good-bye,' says he, and off he goes.

"It took me about two minutes to explain to Devlin that I'd come up to Horton to try to get Jetmore to chop off a hundred on the settlement. Devlin laughed.

" 'Jetmore don't do no choppin',' says he.

" 'Right you are,' says I. 'He won't even give me no extra time.'

" 'What was it you wanted to ask me?' says he.

" 'Mr. Devlin,' says I, 'I'm a poor man. Whether I get that twelve hundred I don't know. But I got some friends in Pittsburgh what's got it, and if you'll let me have that fifty back for railroad fare I'll make it a hundred when I settle up.'

"Devlin blinked hard, and I thought he'd jumped it. But bein' a grafter, that hundred looked too good to lose. He pulls out a big black wallet, counts out five tens, and hands 'em to me careful-like.

" 'Delman,' says he, 'I know you're an honest man. I can tell it by your eyes. I feel sure you'll get the money.'

" 'Mr. Devlin,' says I, holdin' his hand in one hand and the fifty in the other, 'I *will* get the money.' And I leaves him standin' there in the bank, watchin' me through the window.

"Did you go to Pittsburgh?" asked Bendy.

"Bendy," said Dudd, "don't be factious in the presence of genius. You offend me."

"Forgive me," said Bendy, humbly. "Let me see the fifty, Dudd. I just want to touch it."

Margaret's Thanksgiving.*

BY MARY A. P. STANSBURY.

IT was the day before Thanksgiving and Riverton, as became its New England traditions, rested in spicy expectancy. Turkeys, sleekly stuffed, waited the morrow's roasting, molds of plum-pudding and loaves of pound-cake ripened in closely covered jars, and flaky mince and pumpkin pies stood in cooling rows on pantry tables. Spare rooms had been aired and dusted, and beds freshly dressed in lavender-scented linen, in preparation for the home-gathering of exiled Rivertonians.

Only in the old colonial house, giving upon the village square, where Margaret Wynne lived with a single faithful serving-woman, disappointment sat an unbidden guest. Margaret had no near relatives, and the family of distant cousins whom she had expected to partake of her hospitality, had been compelled at the last moment to recall their acceptance of her invitation. It was now too late to replace them by other visitors from abroad, and, Riverton being notably the home of comfortable livers, an eleventh-hour search of highways and hedges was evidently impracticable. Apparently she could do no more than to accept the situation and dine herself in solitary state.

Reclining in an easy-chair at the library window, her Great Dane curled upon a rug at her feet, and her usually tireless hands lying idle in her lap, an unaccustomed mood of depression fell upon her. It was not often that she allowed herself excursions into the past. That way danger lay. Yet now with a certain wilful deliberation she began to retrace the perilous track.

Margaret was only thirty-two, with form and face at the prime of gracious womanly charm, yet to herself she seemed already old. She knew—how well!—just where arose the impassable barrier marking the boundary of her lost youth. She might, indeed, gaze beyond it into the flowery meadows of heart's desire, but never again could she wander there as in the care-free morning of the world.

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She had been just twenty-five when Hugh Durand, four years younger, came to spend a summer at Riverton. They had mutual friends, and the gay, unsophisticated girl-woman and the handsome, brilliant boy, had been thrown much together. From the first they found their tastes congenial. They liked the same books, enjoyed the same pleasures, shared the same passionate love of the woods and fields. Margaret realized nothing except that she was happier than ever before, until one never-to-be-forgotten day, when Hugh suddenly told her that he loved her. At the instant her own heart was revealed to her, but she would not let it speak. She cared for him, of course, she said, but as an elder sister. He was too young to be sure of his choice. First fancies were never to be trusted. But the ardor of the imperious young wooer bore down all her defences. How splendid he was, how irresistible in charm, how utterly dear! After weeks of indecision, on the eve of his departure she yielded, and Hugh carried away her promise.

His letters came—long, frequent, loving. Years ago she had watched them turn to ashes, but on the page of memory the tender, foolish names, the phrases instinct with love and hope, stood imperishable. She forced herself to recall how the intervals between them had begun to lengthen a little, yet she had guessed at no change. He was so busy, she told herself, so tired sometimes, working—for her! If he said less of their love it was because they understood each other too thoroughly to have need of words. So imperceptibly "the little rift" began! How blind and deaf she had dwelt in her fool's paradise!

At length, when she could deceive herself no longer, she had written, and tenderly, with no reproaches, offered him his freedom. His reply came weeks later in a newspaper addressed in his handwriting, and containing a marked notice of his marriage.

The cruelty of it! Sitting in the half-gloom of the gray November day she felt again the twist of the knife in the old wound.

"O Hugh! Hugh!" she moaned. "If you had only told me!"

Womanly pride and the resources of a strong, sweet nature, had come to her aid. Her parents, idolizing their only child, should not be made to suffer vicariously. Social and friendly relationships were still binding, and helpfulness the sovereign balm for sorrow. Nevertheless, something had gone out of her never to be quite recovered. The old spontaneity of joy so keen as to be akin to pain, the swift influx of gladness just to be alive on a golden summer day, or a night sown with stars,—these had departed with the "tender grace" of a dead day.

More than one good man had come to woo, only to be sent gently away. Her father and mother both were gone. For once she let herself drop the roseate glasses of her courageous philosophy and see the forward stretch of her life as it might become, a gray and lonesome road with, in the far distance, a lagging, solitary figure, plodding toward the end.

The sound of rattling wheels checked at her own gate, recalled her to the present. Old Mr. Silas Goodwin, the expressman, was clambering from his wagon slowly with due regard for his rheumatic knees. He lifted the hitching weight from its place in the box and deposited it carefully on the ground, then, stretching his arms to the high seat, he lifted down a very little boy.

Smitten with a tremulous wonder, Margaret rose, and passing quickly through the hall, opened the door and stood upon the threshold. The old man had the child by the hand, and she heard him say in an undertone.

"That's her, sonny. That's Miss Marg'ret."

The boy dropped the guiding fingers and stepped forward with an odd, unchildish dignity. There was no need of the printed tag with name and address stitched so tightly to his jacket-sleeve, for one look had revealed to Margaret his parentage. The straight shoulders, the small, proud head with its glory of blond curls, the delicate, high-bred features, the large, brown, appealing eyes,—all made a replica of that image from which memory had just now dared to lift the veil.

"I'm Hugh Vinton Durand," announced the child in a sweet, high treble. "Are you my auntie Margaret?"

Shaken by a tumult of feeling, Margaret stooped and drew him inside. The old man followed with a little portmanteau.

"Yes, my darling."

She sank into a chair and lifted him to her knee. Somewhere, in some previous existence, she seemed to have known that this would be. For a full minute the boy gazed at her silently, his dark eyes searching her face. Then he breathed deeply.

"You look like favver said, my auntie Margaret," he decided, gravely. "I've come to stay with you because"—he swallowed hard and his lip trembled—"because favver's sick. He has to go a far ways to get well—so far that he can't take me with him." Again there was a convulsive catch in his throat.

Margaret's arms tightened about the little figure.

"Cry, darling, if you want to," she whispered. "Here on my shoulder."

"No, no! I *mustn't* cry—not ever!" He spoke almost in terror. "Favver said so. You must shut your teef hard—and bear it. Then it doesn't hurt so much."

"Gosh!" said Mr. Silas Goodwin under his breath, as he drew his red bandanna handkerchief from his pocket.

"There's a letter," the child went on. "Favver pinned it into my pocket. I might lose it, you know. Can you take out the pin? What makes your fingers shake so, my auntie Margaret?"

Suddenly his face lighted.

"There's the dog! Favver said he was 'most sure there'd be the same one he used to know—old and big—named Bruce, and he'd shake hands with me. Will he, my auntie Margaret?"

"Try him, darling."

The small hand was extended fearlessly. The dog licked it softly, and raised his shaggy paw. The child's lips parted with a flash of pearly teeth.

"His hand is bigger than mine. Favver said so. I can't hold it so very well."

His eyes roamed about the room.

"Where is Sarah, my auntie Margaret?—Sarah that makes cookies shaped like an'mals with sugar on them?"

"Sarah is in the kitchen, dear. I will take you to see her. She will give you some of her nice cookies and bread and milk. You're hungry, aren't you?"

"I fink I am hungry,—fank you, my auntie Margaret."

When Margaret came back to the library Mr. Silas was still standing, hat in hand.

"I jest waited about, Miss Marg'ret," he said, "till the little feller'd be out o' earshot. You know the nine-thirty stops ten minutes for refreshments and the conductor he spent most all o' them minutes a-findin' out whether I was the proper person to take charge o' such a lively parcel. I had e'en amost to swear as I'd known you ever since you was knee high to a grasshopper, afore he could feel to trust either one of us. He never see such a little tacker, he said. All the older children as had their mothers along a-gittin' tired and cross, but not a whimper out o' this one all day long.

"There was a sick woman aboard and once, when the train stopped a little while at a station, the little feller ups and says to her, 'Wouldn't you like to have me speak a piece for you? It always rests father to hear pieces.' And then he got up on the seat an' spoke 'The Night Before Christmas,' all through without missin' a word!

"Miss Marg'ret—excuse me"—twirling his hat awkardly—"I'm an old man, you know—but—bygones bein' bygones—you'll keep the little feller, won't ye?"

"*Keep* him—Mr. Silas!"

The wrinkled face broke into smiles.

"That's all I wanted to know. Good-day, Miss Marg'ret."

While the old man chirruping to his horse, drove briskly up the street and, in the pleasant kitchen, old Sarah replenished her little visitor's bowl, Margaret broke the seal of her letter. How tremulous must have been the hand which made the familiar strokes!

"Dear Margaret," it ran, "if you were like other women I must have asked leave to send you my boy. You being you, to wait would have been distrust.

"Since his mother died three years ago, he has never been a night away from me. It is only to your arms that I can yield him now. You will make of him a better man than I could hope to.

"I cannot write much, and I say nothing of the past except forgive me! I was more weak than wicked, Margaret, but weakness, in the pain it causes, in its results of vacillation and failure, may be almost worse than wickedness.

"So I have tried above all else to teach my boy to be strong. Yet I have not had courage—he is such a little fellow—to explain to him—death. He thinks me going on a journey—as indeed I am. God knows how far and long! Spare him further knowledge for a while. Let it come to him gradually, as he can bear it, through the medium of your own deep tenderness.

"I have nothing but my love to leave for him or for you. The little money I have remaining will suffice only to requite the kind-hearted people who care for me, and to cover me by-and-by in the earth.

"God bless you forever, Margaret! If out of your memories of me some few remain bright and untarnished, is it too much to ask that you share them with my boy?

"Hugh."

A half-hour later the answer sped on the wings of the lightning:

"He is here and safe. I love him. He is my thanksgiving to God—and you. You had my forgiveness long ago without the asking, as you now have my love.

"Margaret."

Before the glowing grate that night, with the leaping lights and